



Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 9/29/1999

GAIN Report # GT9021

Guatemala

Rain Damage Assessment

1999

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Report Highlights:

Guatemala has experienced excessive rains this season. In the last few weeks these rains have caused damage to infrastructure. While there has been some damage to crops such as corn, tobacco, sesame and bananas, thus far the damage is minimal. Rains are expected to continue and loss estimates may increase.

Includes PSD changes: No

Includes Trade Matrix: No

Unscheduled Report

Guatemala [GT1], GT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 1999 rainy season, Guatemala has received above average rainfall, reaching an average of 11 inches of rain per month during the months of June, July, August and September. During the same period of 1998, an average of 9 inches per month was reached. Heavier rains in the last few weeks (14 inches in September) have slightly affected agriculture and infrastructure in several regions of Guatemala. Currently, the main problem is damage to infrastructure, with only minor reports of damage to agriculture. The departments of Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Zacapa, Izabal, Escuintla, El Progreso and Chiquimula have sustained the most damage. In addition, there are other departments with some minor infrastructure problems like Alta Verapaz, Huehuetenango, Solola, Quetzaltenango and Jutiapa.

The most damage is reported to the banana crop. Over 1,100 acres of Guatemala's 42,000 acres of banana plantations are flooded and water levels are still too high to account for total damages. Officials have not been able to review the full damage to banana plantations, but it estimated that around 3% of total area has been lost. In other crops, it is estimated that less than 1 percent of total production has been lost because of the rains. The Government of Guatemala (GOG) reports that around 800 acres of corn, 950 acres of sesame seed, 173 acres of tobacco and 200 acres of pastures have been damaged by flooding and rain. Guatemalan total planted area for these crops is estimated as follows: 1,452,000 acres of corn, 70,000 acres of sesame seed, 22,000 acres of tobacco. In addition, other crops such as papayas, tomatoes, limes, pepper, plantains and melons are experiencing lesser problems and acreage damage is minimal. Forecasters predict more rain in the coming weeks and damage estimates could increase.

DAMAGE BY REGION

SOUTHERN REGION

Retalhuleu

Flooding of the Samalá river caused damage to infrastructure, access ways and around 90 acres planted with corn. 90 acres planted with sesame seed have been either damaged or wiped out by the water.

Suchitepequez

Flooding has caused damage to around 630 acres of corn (funguses and low percentage of germination have been detected). Around 900 acres of sesame seed have been damaged from fungus or rotting. In addition, the harvest of around 100 acres of tobacco will be delayed .

Escuintla

This department is experiencing flooding from the Coyolate river. Although only around 35 acres of corn and 40 acres of plantain have been damaged, there is an existing threat of flooding if the rains continue as expected.

NORTHWEST REGION

Izabal

River levels in Izabal have reached 17 feet. Some flooding has been reported in rice, corn and pastures. Flooding problems in the banana region of Bobos has forced Bandegua (Del Monte) to close down four farms and lay off some 1000 workers. The total banana area damaged by flooding is estimated in around 1,100 acres.

Zacapa

Zacapa is experiencing flooding of the Motagua river - the river severely damages by hurricane Mitch in 1998. Damages account for 200 acres of pastures, 45 acres of corn and 45 acres of tobacco flooded. In addition, there are reports of floods by El Jute river.

Chiquimula

Damages in Chiquimula are mainly infrastructural and only 40 acres of damaged corn have been reported.

El Progreso

Damaged crops in this area include lime, pepper, tomato, tobacco, papaya and pastures. However, the entire damaged area is estimated at only around 45 acres. Flooding of the Guastatoya river has been reported.

OTHER REGIONS

Other regions do not report damage to agriculture. However, minor damage to infrastructure, landslides, and damage to access ways have been reported.